

## CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER COX

### *Homeland Security Update...*

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### **Hearing Examines Role of DHS and Private Sector in Infrastructure Protection**

The very core of DHS' mission is to protect the American homeland from another terrorist attack. A large part of this mission requires the government to coordinate with the private sector, which owns and operates over 85 percent of the critical infrastructure, including health care, agriculture, chemical plants, information technology, electricity, and emergency services.

On Wednesday, April 21, 2004, the Subcommittee on Infrastructure & Border Security and the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Science, Research & Development held a joint hearing to examine public-private partnerships for infrastructure protection and information sharing – specifically, the relationship between the Department of Homeland Security and various critical infrastructure sectors.

This hearing emphasized the need for DHS to develop an implementation plan to conduct risk assessments for cyber and physical components with the private sector, as well as coordinate with state and local officials. While this is a difficult and complex process, the Department needs to document this methodology so both public and private sectors understand what is expected of them.

Vulnerability assessments and identification of key assets are important in every state of the union. Federal coordination with state and local governments is also vital, so that they can be prepared to protect assets and perform a quick recovery in case of an attack.

The General Accounting Office is preparing a report for the Committee on information sharing and analysis requirements for the private sector. The report will be published within the coming weeks and will provide an update on current progress and policy options to improve public-private cooperation. The Committee looks forward to receiving GAO's suggestions.